



The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 2.6

Spiritual Work

The Dharma of the Path



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Chapter 2.6

Spiritual Work



The Dharma of the Path

Spiritual work builds upon and expands spiritual practice and tailors the application of spiritual principles to broader goals (beyond individual basis). While spiritual work includes development, the emphasis must necessarily be upon service.

Spiritual work involves both development and service. In the latter stages of the path, spiritual work is almost entirely concerned with service.

Spiritual Work

Spiritual work is work performed by the spiritual student (aspirant, disciple, initiate) by virtue of his or her having made some commitment to the spiritual path of conscious evolution and by virtue of having thereby evoked some general or particular calling. That calling may be consciously recognized or not, but as the student becomes more conscious and better qualified, the student naturally responds and performs whatever work is there to be done.

Spiritual work generally includes development and service. Both of these dimensions are considered to be the dharma of the path. In the early stages of the path there is a natural emphasis on development, in developing the qualifications for more effective service. In the later stages of the path, as the limitations of the personality are generally overcome, there is a natural emphasis on service or expression of qualified energies. Spiritual work builds upon and expands spiritual practice and tailors the application of spiritual principles to broader goals (beyond individual basis). Those who attempt spiritual work without having embraced the requisite spiritual practice are generally rather ineffective, as little if any of the higher energies will be attracted or expressed. But those who have embraced the preliminary discipline, who are engaged in spiritual practice, will naturally attract the needed energies and have the wherewithal to express them harmoniously, in accordance with the needs of the field of service.

The development of the spiritual student never really ends. And the so-called advanced student embraces the same preliminary discipline and spiritual practice as the neophyte. But as the student progresses, the work of development becomes more and more subtle. As the relative coarseness of the lower self (personality) is overcome, as the artificial independence and relative strength of personality (intellect) (ego) is transcended, the student becomes more and more effective and works more and more on subtle levels. Further development ultimately becomes synonymous with and wholly subordinated to service.

The principal role of the spiritual student is to serve humanity (and broader, planetary needs) according to his or her abilities, character, temperament, and values (spiritual maturity). Since service is predominantly a response to higher consciousness, there is ever a group context. Thus service is never (properly) a matter of contrived or individual effort. It is (properly) always a matter of context, the place and role of the student with the spiritual group, with the race (culture) (country) (humanity) (world) [circumstances].

Although there is particular work associated with each of the seven rays (and associated ashrams) and associated with each of the various groups of souls, it is more important for the student to respond to whatever calling is perceived rather than to determine (rationally) what needs to be done. Thus the student's circumstances generally convey the work to be done. There is opportunity for development and service no matter where the student is placed. It is the dharma of the student to do whatever is before him (her) to do. If the heart is properly functioning, the student will simply find himself (herself) in the needed work. In the final analysis, just being in incarnation, just living in the world according to higher principles, affords both suitable development and service. By virtue of consciousness embraced, the student naturally (properly) shares higher energies and plays whatever role is need (consciously or otherwise).

« Commentary No. 122

Work and the Path

Work is defined as a sustained effort (energy transference) to overcome obstacles and achieve an objective or result. One might ask what is the relationship between work and the spiritual path, or what is the nature of the path with respect to sustained effort. The goal or objective of the evolutionary path is reasonably well-known for the human lifewave: it is the perfection of human consciousness. But what constitutes that relative perfection and in how many ways may it be achieved? Are there any specific requirements for liberation? The answers are rather simple and general.

The requirements for graduation from the human sphere of activity are rather broad, being in terms of quality of consciousness and quality in various areas of

experience. The spiritual teachings are filled with suggested preliminary requirements and immediate goals that need to be fulfilled before liberation is possible. But every human being represents a path from self-consciousness to God-consciousness, and no two paths will be identical. Each must ultimately fill the general (subjective) requirements, but each way will embrace different (though similar in many general ways) experiences. Part of the beauty of the one path is that it is comprised of so many different (complementary) paths, each of which leads to the same objective and each contributes to the evolution of the lifewave. Though many paths exist, they all eventually blend and merge as the summit is approached. The common denominator is the objective and the overall work or sustained effort that is required for completion. And that completed consciousness can only be described subjectively and qualitatively.

The work involved (in the more abstract sense) remains approximately the same for all candidates. The overall effort (work) required for graduation is approximately the same for every path upward to divinity. But there is considerable flexibility in how that overall effort may be placed. Work might be defined as the product of two factors; where the overall effort remains fixed, the two factors may be varied inversely to accomplish the same objective. The first factor is force or the intensity of effort. The second factor is distance or the duration of effort. An intense effort over a short period of time may lead to perfection in just a few lifetimes. But a little effort over a long period of time may lead to the same end after many incarnations. In either case (and period in between) the end result is the same (at least for the individual), and the overall effort (work) expended is the same. It is for this reason that it is said that there are no short cuts on the spiritual path, that all paths lead ultimately to the summit. But in each path there remains an element of grace to be considered, as well as individual and group karma.

The hastened (deliberate) path of evolution (greater intensity of effort over a shorter duration) is the spiritual path proper, the conscious effort towards evolution. The gradual path (lesser intensity of effort over a much longer timeframe) is the unconscious evolution of the mass of humanity. There are dangers involved with too great an intensity of effort, just as there are dangers inherent in too little intensity of effort. Karma is the overriding factor which compensates for every extreme, leading all elements onward.

Intelligent and conscious evolutionary effort (along the spiritual path) is necessary for the relatively few in order to encourage and sustain the evolutionary momentum of the entire lifewave. It is for this reason that the call of the path is sounded, that more of humanity might count the cost (sustained and serious effort) and dedicate themselves to the work and task of the spiritual path, service to God and service to humanity.

« Commentary No. 240

The Objective Work

The spiritual work of the serious spiritual student falls naturally into two aspects: objective work that is performed in the external world (on primarily objective levels) and subjective work that is performed internally (within consciousness) (on primarily subjective levels). Work suggests activities in which energy or effort is expended for some useful (spiritual) purpose.

Spiritual students may work primarily with some aspect of human evolution, or they may work primarily with the animal kingdom or the plant kingdom. Some may even cooperate consciously with the deva lives, though that usually involves more subjective work. The opportunities throughout the evolutionary kingdoms for practical (objective) service are plentiful (many and varied), provided the student is willing and responsive to the opportunities.

Virtually every form of work has its opportunities for collateral or incidental spiritual service, though the apparent magnitude of the actual service may be small, the expended (sincere) effort along constructive lines may be quite meaningful. The student who is employed professionally should look for meaningful opportunities to express some form of spiritual energy (mental or otherwise) in his work or through his working environment. Though spiritual service (proper) is more a state of consciousness than an actual endeavor, the student should respond easily to even incidental opportunities for useful work. The student may also be able to work with or through one or more of the various nonprofit organizations (full-time or part-time) (along religious, educational, philosophical, metaphysical, or humanitarian lines).

The objective work may take any or several of many forms, from actual physical labor for a worthy cause, to objective meditation work to qualify the energies shared in some externalized effort. It may involve the sharing of energy through useful publications, or through teaching, public speaking, counseling, or sharing. It may simply involve the expression of good thoughts and feelings toward all. It may involve financial support of worthy projects (also with discretion) (spiritual students usually live below their means in order to liberate funds to sustain the objective (spiritual) work). It may involve the expression of kindness toward other lives (human, animal, and plant), or it may involve simply the conscious projection of healing energies (impersonally) during meditation. There is really no limit to the ways and means of useful, practical effort along spiritual lines.

There is also spiritual work implied in almost every aspect of the ordinary (daily) life, through relationships with other persons, or through contact with animal or plant lives. The proper attitude of service (in the sense of spiritual work) is an attitude of helpfulness, without self-consciousness. The student should not be concerned with the magnitude (importance) of the task, nor with any credit or recognition of his work, nor even with seeing the results. To some are given the opportunity of planting seeds; to others are given the opportunity of cultivation and encouragement. The spiritual student should not be attached to his activities, no matter how worthy they might appear. And as the spiritual values (energies) are properly embodied (incorporated in the spiritual lifestyle (disposition)), so shall the opportunity for useful (objective) work be more easily recognized and more effectively accomplished, without any personal consideration. The spiritual student usually has considerable control over his involvement in the outer work, but the student must still cultivate willingness and responsiveness, and the idea of impersonal service in every aspect of the daily life.

Ashramic Work

Both horizontally and vertically polarized ashrams may be manifested or unmanifested (though vertically polarized ashrams are more likely to be manifested). A manifested ashram is one whose sphere of influence extends as low as the lower (concrete) mental plane. No ashram (in the esoteric sense) extends below the mental plane onto emotional or physical levels. A manifested ashram can therefore establish linkage with the minds of its members (workers) (representatives) who are in incarnation (provided they are responsive).

An unmanifested ashram does not extend as low as the concrete mental plane, and depending on its character, may not even extend as low as the buddhic plane. Consequently, members of unmanifested ashrams who happen to be in incarnation are usually assigned temporary affiliations and work within the framework of both ashrams. Certain ashrams may manifest cyclically as needed.

The work assigned to a particular ashram (or group of ashrams) depends on the nature, qualification, and capability of the ashram and its relationship to the work. Proper ashramic work is performed almost exclusively on subjective levels (abstract mental and beyond) and involves some form of energy manipulation. That energy manipulation may include reception, transformation, clarification, qualification, modification, distribution, and/or transmission. Each ashram is particularly qualified by one or more of the seven rays (usually by primary and secondary rays), which provide the ashram with specific capabilities. The members of the ashram are particularly adept (trained and experienced) in working with the specific (assigned) energies, and they work as a single, coherent, group-conscious organism.

The togetherness implied in ashramic work actually means the merging of consciousness in the group qualification. This by no means implies that these members (souls) function in any objective sense (except by reflection as personalities if they are in incarnation) (but the personalities are not (cannot be) directly involved in the ashramic work (which is limited to soul levels)). As

souls the members are interactive on soul levels, without the incapacity of lacking proper preparation (as is the case of the majority of souls), and en rapport to such an extent (subjectively) that there is virtually no awareness of objective manifestation. Besides, ashramic work (proper) does not really pertain to the outer, externalized instruments (personalities), except in the sense that these energies are ultimately passed on to the workers in incarnation and freely distributed on practical levels. Enlightened personalities do serve a purpose, but it is not equivalent to or synonymous with the real (subjective) work of the ashram.

Ashramic work is primarily an extension and fulfillment of hierarchical work and the consciousness of the planetary logos (and to a certain extent of the solar logos and other planetary logoi). Hierarchical work pertains to the overall evolution of consciousness within the planetary scheme, with some emphasis on human evolution. There is considerable collaboration with the higher-order deva (angelic) lives and to some extent with the group consciousness of mineral, plant, and animal lives. But much of the work involves humanity and the transformation of energy from both internal (planetary) and external (extra-planetary) sources and its liberation (application) for constructive purposes. The hierarchical work deals with these various energies on a rather broad scale (and involves generalized plans), while ashramic work is concerned with the particulars of energy distribution and with specific work (usually along ray lines).

« Commentary No. 248

The Subjective Work

Subjective work along ashramic lines can be compared and contrasted with the combination of objective and subjective work of the incarnated mind-soul. As souls, the enlightened of humanity are involved in ashramic or hierarchical work.

As mind-souls in incarnation, the various workers (aspirants and disciples) are responsible for applying or manifesting the ashramic energies on more concrete levels and thereby assisting in the distribution and fulfillment of the needed energies. The souls involved in the ashramic work proper cannot serve this particular function because they are not externalized (and are not able to

function on concrete levels) and because, as souls, they are prohibited from working directly with the minds of men (there are considerable karmic and evolutionary reasons to support this prohibition). Consequently, they depend on the aspirants and disciples in incarnation to fulfill the needed extension and application of their energies.

Unmanifested ashrams work entirely on higher levels without recourse to concrete mental levels, while manifested ashrams do function to some degree on concrete mental levels and are therefore able to impress the minds of their responsive and respective workers. This process of qualification parallels the general release of these energies for all of humanity. The mind-souls in incarnation facilitate the sharing of energy simply by virtue of their presence within humanity; by responding to the subjective energies (consciously or unconsciously) the aspirants and disciples of the world establish subjective patterns of response and assimilation for others to follow (unconsciously). Thus the embodiment and sharing of these energies by cooperative and responsive spiritual students is a very potent force of encouragement for all of humanity. Workers in incarnation have greater freedom for the application of these energies than their subjective counterparts, because workers in incarnation share directly in the karma and immediate consciousness of humanity. Such would not be the case for energies imposed from external sources.

Much of the subjective work of the spiritual student is performed unconsciously or during meditation. A great deal of work may be accomplished during sleep, when the mind-aura is free from the confines and limitations of the lesser body. A great deal of work may be accomplished unconsciously through the aura, simply through the presence of a spiritually potent consciousness. The student who walks in the light and love is forever sharing these energies subjectively whether the student is aware of it or not. And during meditation, the spiritual student can link up with the subjective energies directly, better qualify himself for their useful application, and consciously begin sharing these energies by projection. The enlightened student still declines to interfere or impose these energies upon others (no matter how great the apparent need), but rather, the student will make these energies available to all who need (and who are receptive and responsive).

The subjective work of the spiritual student should complement and supplement the objective work. The effectiveness of the student is enhanced considerably by the extent and duration to which the student is fully aligned with the soul, and conversely detracted considerably by the extent to which the student is absorbed by personality (mundane) matters. Thus the student is always encouraged to maintain his spiritual repose (alignment) (consciousness) regardless of involvement in objective matters, to perform the needed work, whether it is subjective or objective, spiritual or necessarily mundane, but without absorption in glamour and without distraction in the personality.

« Commentary No. 735

Discrimination in Activity 1

One of the most formidable stumbling blocks of the would-be aspirant to the spiritual path (including many who consider themselves to be relatively advanced spiritual students) is the enchantment of activity. Modern society offers innumerable ways for people to fill their time. Many people exist in a continuous state of "busyness," a state wherein activity begets further activity in an endless circle. Filling each moment with activity in intense pursuit of business and pleasure is an obsession to many people (third ray personalities being particularly vulnerable).

What sets the sincere aspirant (seeker of truth) apart from the masses of humanity blindly immersed in busyness is his attempt to discriminate, to distinguish the (relatively) real from the unreal. In other words, within the mind of the aspirant should be the constant questions, "What is really important?" and "What is worth doing?" He should also be asking, "Why is this being done?" From a higher perspective, nothing in the domain of the personality is really important, but there are, nonetheless, some activities which have some relative worth or appropriateness and many other activities which have little, none, or even a degree of inappropriateness.

Time and energy are valuable resources to the spiritual student. There is much work to be done in the context of the spiritual path. There are some activities which are necessary to mere survival and maintenance of a moderately

comfortable lifestyle and family relationship. There are other activities which stem from real karmic obligation (as opposed to a presumed obligation, which may be simply an imposition of one person's will (expectation) upon another). The spiritual student is compelled to participate appropriately in mundane activities, such as these.

Many aspirants fail to distinguish between what is indeed compelling mundane activity and what is merely personality self-indulgence, which activities will lead them further along the spiritual path and which will serve to deflect their focus and progress. It is not uncommon to hear aspirants excuse themselves from service activities or a disciplined meditation program because they are "too busy." They can find time to fit into their schedules all of the trivia of mundane life, yet those activities which alone can draw them nearer to reality (the essence of Life), and are therefore the most worthwhile of all activities, are crowded out. In reality, people tend to find time (somehow) to do what they want to do. Activities provide a telling picture of what a person's values and priorities are. If there is no time in the schedule for spiritual work and discipline, it is generally because the aspirant continues to be absorbed in the mundane world and regards the personality life as his highest priority (despite what he may believe or claim to the contrary).

It is not uncommon to hear some of these same aspirants seeking to discover a quick and easy path to enlightenment, because they are so busy that they don't have the time to put forth much effort toward the spiritual goals they desire to reach. The spiritual path is no light undertaking. Progress comes only to those who take a consistent and committed approach to group endeavor and individual self-discipline. The spiritual path is not for those who are too busy with mundane and social affairs to put forth the required effort. Indeed, one of the crowning examples of arrogance is that an individual should somehow expect God (the Elder Brothers) (the soul or Christ within) to be concerned and aid in his or her development when the individual is too busy to dedicate time or effort in seeking God or serving, in whatever way possible, the Plan.

Discrimination in Activity 2

While the purpose of physical incarnation is to “experience” in the physical world, this is no justification for indiscriminate activity. The experiences that are karmically merited (needed) will come, whether they are sought or not. These experiences must be faced. The deliberate (conscious) seeking of experience, however, as an end in itself for sensation, thrill, glamour, ego, etc. is a real impediment to personality integration because it perpetuates the reign of the lower nature. The experience of the physical incarnation is designed to lead humanity to the realization of higher consciousness through the renting of the veils of maya. The spiritual student is to deliberately distance himself from as much unnecessary activity as is possible that he may see through these veils rather than further enmesh himself within them. Simplification and discrimination are the keys to this process.

The dedicated spiritual student will generally be as busy as (or busier than) most of humanity, but the activities that he chooses to devote his time to will be of a very different nature than those to which most of humanity devote their time. The rules (governing appropriate behavior and activity) for those who take the spiritual path seriously are very different than the rules for those who are unaware that there is a spiritual path or who are aware but choose to continue primarily along the slow path of gradual evolution with the masses. The spiritual student seeks to simplify his life (eliminating unnecessary activity) and to detach himself from the temporary forms of physical plane existence to whatever extent is possible.

The dedicated spiritual student seeks relationships primarily on the level of the soul, and while he leads a life of active service to humanity, he does not attach himself to its various personality expressions. He continues to fulfill whatever “duty” he may realize, but he tends to withdraw most of his energy from purely personality or social activities that it might be better utilized for spiritual purposes. To those around him, the spiritual student may appear to lead a very dull, uneventful, or even hermit-like existence. He may appear (because he is for the most part) disinterested in most of the “colorful” worldly pleasures and events that enchant the masses. It is impossible for those who see the purpose

of life as being the pursuit of happiness through worldly experience and relationships to understand the perspective of one who may have previously sampled some such experience, and in it found nothing that was more than temporary, nothing that to him was or approached reality (substance) (or real value).

Because his life is dedicated to the evolution of consciousness (both individually and in terms of his service to humanity), which he sees as the purpose of the experience in the physical world, the committed spiritual student chooses deliberately all of his activities with spiritual purpose in mind. For example, if given the choice between working to obtain orthodox credentials, laurels, and recognition, or quietly and selflessly participating in an endeavor which he recognizes to have some spiritual merit, the dedicated spiritual student will choose the latter (unlike most of humanity).

The Sanskrit term “sannyasin” describes the dedicated spiritual student who has abstracted the lesson of worldly activity and no longer feels desire for any worldly attachment and distraction. He has freed himself for a life of active, purposeful service to the Hierarchy and humanity. His service may require that he withdraw into a cloistered environment, or he may be more effective remaining where he is within the outer world, yet focused on the inner.



Section 2.61



Development

The development of the spiritual student never really ends. The dharma of the path includes spiritual development in its various dimensions and aspects, but as the student matures, the emphasis (focus) shifts from individual development to group service. Development engages the head-centered nature.

Development

The whole arena of life in the lower worlds of human endeavor is a matter of development (experience leading to assimilation of experience leading to growth (deepening) leading eventually to conscious service and the fulfillment of evolutionary goals on a broad scale). Development is both an individual matter, in the sense of preparing oneself for effective spiritual work (service) as well as collective, in the sense that it is the race as a whole that evolves in consciousness, and in the sense that each student (each person) contributes to that evolution in collective consciousness by virtue of his or her experience and expression, development and service.

Development proceeds in a number of different ways, according to one's circumstances and according to need at some level. There is a goal or objective for humanity as a whole (and in general for members of humanity) that one works toward (as circumstances conspire to create or evoke the needed experience leading to the needed growth in consciousness), and there are particular goals or objectives for each individual (established by the soul in group context). In a sense, each root-race contains the archetype or matrix for development of particular characteristics and abilities. Each sub-race contributes to the progress of the root-race. Each sub-race (and each branch-race) explores various opportunities for development.

In addition to the seven-fold racial expression (seven root-races, seven sub-races, seven branch-races) (which correlate to the seven rays in one dimension) there is developmental work associated with each of the seven rays in the personal (personality) dimension, such that eventually the student achieves maturity along each of the seven ray lines (even though the student also specializes in one or another of the rays by virtue of his or her soul ray). Thus each personality expression (incarnation) is intended to develop along one or another of the ray lines whatever is next needed. With considerable diversity of ray types in incarnation (at the soul level and at the personality level), the whole is served (broader experience afforded by virtue of contrast, diversity, etc.).

Development is a never-ending panorama. There is always work to be done, on every level of manifestation. Even those who are not progressing consciously are progressing unconsciously by virtue of their experience (which is gradually assimilated at higher levels). The force of evolution is inexorable. As one becomes more and more conscious, one naturally discerns the presence of that force and its inherent (underlying) purpose, and one then naturally responds appropriately, working with the flow of evolutionary force rather than impeding it through inertia (absorption at material (body, ego) levels. One can even be responsive unconsciously, particularly as one becomes more qualified (refined in consciousness). Ultimately the only impediment is ego, and the ego is eventually transcended (and some more subtle challenge evoked).

Eventually, as the student matures, the focus shifts from individual (collective) development to individual (group) service. In this sense, service is another dimension (extension) of development, less personal, more inclusive. The student continues to develop, but the focus is upon service, upon doing what promotes the broader evolutionary goals rather than what appears to promote one's own apparent goals. In the final analysis, one cannot evolve in isolation. One can only really evolve as the entire group progresses, for individuality is merely a perspective. And development is merely a process within a broader scheme of things.

« Commentary No. 324

Preliminary Work

A considerable amount of preliminary (exoteric) (probationary) work (experience) is normally required before a spiritual student can be assimilated by an esoteric group. That preliminary work normally extends over several lifetimes of relatively conscious spiritual effort and is required in order to bring the consciousness of the student into (qualitative) alignment with the appropriate esoteric group (via the soul relationship). Some students may be karmically related to a particular esoteric group (due to prior association with the group or its members), but even they cannot approach the esoteric group without sufficient quality of consciousness and character. The quality (character) of an esoteric group is such that no one can approach beyond (within) the ring-pass-not without proper qualification. But with sufficient experience

and quality of consciousness, the student will naturally gravitate to an appropriate (esoteric) group and be gradually assimilated (via refinement).

The needed experience is mostly exoteric and therefore within the domain (opportunity) of experience in the lower worlds. The needed experience includes (that which leads to) a broad understanding of theosophical philosophy, a fairly good (honest) understanding of the self (the personality, its psychology (complexity), and the soul relationship), considerable reformation of the personality, considerable mental training, and considerable experience in working with people. As this preliminary work is accomplished the individual becomes less personal (less personality-centered), more service-oriented, less vulnerable to glamour and illusion, more able to recognize truth (via self-reliance), less distracted by mundane experience, and more responsive to the soul (and spiritual qualification). Some of the preliminary work can be accomplished in isolation (introspection) (relative rapport with the inner self), but much of the work implies considerable interaction with other people.

The preliminary work is predominantly objective (exoteric), and continues to some extent even as the deeper (esoteric) qualifications are met and as considerable subjective work (experience) is undertaken. As the preliminary work is accomplished (and as the intensity (noise) of the personality is dampened), the spiritual student becomes an energy bridge between the inner world of subjective (spiritual) energy (encouragement) and the outer world of objective activity and service, particularly as the individual learns to work cooperatively (and patiently) with other spiritually-minded people.

Cooperative (social) skills cannot be developed in isolation, and many of the key ingredients (qualifications) for esoteric work (assimilation) can only be learned in conjunction with exoteric group experience.

Most metaphysical (exoteric) (outer) groups are quite sincere and spiritually-minded (well-intended), but most suffer personality-centeredness and various limitations (glamour) (illusion). But even so, they usually afford the student a considerable opportunity for meaningful experience and expression (adjustment), as the individual in turn contributes to the quality, character, and growth (in consciousness) of the group experience (service) and that of its members. Though the exoteric (outer) group affords some parallels to more

esoteric work (particularly in the case of exoteric groups aligned with esoteric counterparts) and preliminary experience, the exoteric group experience is relatively far removed, for the exoteric group is (more-or-less) a group of well-intended personalities (aligned or otherwise), while the esoteric group is a group of coherently-aligned souls (where the corresponding personalities are soul-aligned and responsive to the soul (group) energy).

« Commentary No. 339

Development and Service

Individual development is an important part of the spiritual path, particularly in the sense that as the individual evolves so does the group (humanity). But the spiritual student must learn to balance the individual development with sincere service, for the two are ultimately coupled such that individual development (beyond a certain point) is not possible without service and service is not possible without some elements of individual development.

The head-centered approach to the spiritual path is often relatively self-centered and rational (more or less mentally polarized), where the individual is principally concerned with his or her own development. Considerable development is possible without spiritual motive, but such development does not normally include the quality of consciousness, being principally a development of mental abilities. Without spiritual motive such development leads to a potent, integrated personality limited to personality levels of consciousness (i.e., physical, emotional, and concrete mental levels). Without spiritual motive (and spiritual responsiveness) there will not be afforded any of the proper training and balanced development characterized by those truly upon (committed to) the spiritual path. With spiritual motive, the individual development is tempered by concern for others; personal development is transformed into impersonal development and service. And the spiritual student becomes relatively selfless.

The heart-centered approach to the spiritual path is also often a relatively self-centered approach, in the sense that it is often initially motivated by glamour or emotional consideration. The individual may be absorbed by personal

development or the individual may be absorbed by the glamour of service. In either case, the individual must ultimately progress beyond the personal, emotional polarization into the relatively impersonal, heart-centered (but mentally polarized) condition of consciousness, where individual development is valued but secondary to proper service, as the spiritual student becomes relatively selfless. Those who fail to make the needed transition (development) (balance) (to relative maturity) are generally not really committed to the path.

The proper (effective) service motive is not personality-centered. Personality-centered service is simply a self-centered, superficial service that is a reaction to glamour or a rationalized activity. True (proper) service is natural, spontaneous, impersonal, and balanced between the head-centered and heart-centered natures. Proper service is more a condition in consciousness than an externalized activity, a sharing of energy and encouragement by virtue of being spiritually conscious and reasonably aligned with the soul. There may be service activities, nonetheless, but those activities are intended to facilitate the general, impersonal sharing of energy (life, love, light).

But service (disposition) (purposive activity) is no excuse for neglecting individual development (reformation) (refinement), just as development is no excuse for lacking a service motive. A lack of service motive is a lack of quality in consciousness; a lack of individual development is an indication of mundane (personality) absorption (albeit the converse is not necessarily true). The spiritual student should commit the bulk of his discretionary (available) time to service (directly or indirectly) while leaving sufficient time for individual qualification. The spiritual student should be committed to a conscientious daily mediation (including retrospection) (and including energy qualification for humanity). A lack of sufficient time is an illusion engendered by the personality; the mental life of a dedicated spiritual student is quite sufficient for all appropriate purposes.

Development and Limitation

Individual development and its relationship to group (human) progress should be of some (moderate) concern to the spiritual student, although, like most aspects of the spiritual path (and the esoteric philosophy), it should not be a major focus but should be properly balanced with sufficient concern for meeting responsibilities (including service). Though many forms of limitation may seem to deter or inhibit development, in fact there are no real limits to individual development as long as that development remains in harmony with greater purpose (and associated cosmic law).

Apparent limitation relative to individual development includes the limitation of immediate karma, the limitation of personal energy, and the limitation of environment which transmit to the individual (and the group) the karmic consequences of previous activity and expression, i.e., the earned circumstances of personality condition, tendencies, and external influences and opportunities. Those karmic consequences may be viewed in terms of opportunity and limitation but in fact are wholly aimed at providing the very lessons needed (earned) by the individual. In every apparent limitation lies an opportunity for learning and progression, but that progression may be slow where the learning process is more or less unconscious, and less slow where the individual is learning more consciously and actually trying to apply or incorporate the lessons so learned.

Karmic consequences regardless of form are always the responsibility of the individual to face and experience. As the individual progresses so do the karmic consequences (conditions) change accordingly (if not understandably). Those who attempt to embrace their own condition and circumstances with a realistic and reasonable attitude are more likely to learn and progress on to more worthy (more difficult or more subtle) challenges (there is never any real lack of opportunity (!)). This attitude toward karmic consequences (whether or not understood as such) relates to some extent to the degree of personal energy or ego.

Personal energy is probably the greatest single (apparent) limitation to individual progress and as a form of limitation ranges from self-centered distraction, to the case of absorption in personal development (which is no less a form of limitation) (people who are absorbed in their own development (and their own self-interests) tend to develop and sustain actual (psychological and/or physiological) barriers to their own advancement). Personal energy (ego) is inherently self-deceptive and tends to resist spiritual progress due to inertia and the fear of subordination (lack of personal freedom). Many are those who make excuses for their own lack of attention to individual cultivation, but such excuses generally indicate some form of (personal) self-indulgence rather than responsiveness to duty (albeit the majority of humanity are not expected to evolve consciously).

Though personal energy may be the greatest apparent (and self-imposed) limitation, the real limitation of individual development is the limitation of qualification, which implies that there are intended (general) standards for individual development in terms of character and quality of consciousness, balance (service) and direction. The path ultimately involves all of life, subject to the specific (subjective) purposes of the greater life (logos), and therefore all individual development must ultimately be integrated to serve that higher purpose. This means that though considerable freedom exists for individual development, that freedom must be tempered by the unity of all life.

« Commentary No. 367

Psychic Development

A potential problem (stumbling block) for aspirants to the spiritual path is an (inordinate) interest in psychic phenomena and attempted psychic development. Phenomena distract the aspirant from the real task at hand, which is to purify and refine his character, integrate his personality, and align it with his soul in order to serve God and humanity.

Long ago in Atlantean days when the emphasis was on emotional (astral) development, psychic awareness was commonplace. But today in the Aryan Epoch, the focus for progressive man has been (and needs to be) shifted to

mental development (the mental plane), and for spiritual students, soul alignment (the abstract mental and intuitive planes). Psychic (astral) sensitivities in man have generally been reduced so that man may concentrate on developing and refining the higher, mental faculties. This is a necessary step for soul alignment, intuitive awareness, and wisdom. Thus the true power of the soul (which is much higher than psychic (astral) powers) may be properly tapped.

The aspirant enamored by phenomena who attempts psychic development may be invoking a number of potential problems. Premature opening of the chakra centers can bring instability and even insanity. Part of the problem is that only with a purified personality, soul alignment, spiritual maturity, and proper training come real discretion, understanding (discernment) and control of psychic (astral) energies. The unaware and unqualified student is ill-equipped to work in a field where glamour and illusion abound, when he has little ability to discern the real from the unreal.

A similar situation applies to those who are involuntary or untrained (and unqualified) psychics and give readings. Many are sincere and well-meaning, but lack the needed discernment; they are likely to have perceptions that are distorted or untrue (astral impressions frequently are not what they seem to be, and are usually biased by the participants' own thoughts and feelings). Only someone with the necessary soul alignment and spiritual maturity can be trained to work with validity on the astral plane (if there is a need). Often information in psychic (astral) readings or impressions tends to inflate the aspirant's ego, which if an individual is personality-centered (instead of soul-aligned), he will easily believe what is said as true as it supports his own self-glamour (self-deception).

Another factor to consider is motive. The serious spiritual student is not self-centered nor interested in developing psychic powers. He does not seek the special attention (ego gratification) that often goes with those who claim to be psychic. He knows there is no easy way (such as from a psychic) to receive answers to problems (no one is an authority with respect to another). Each student must decide for himself (after alignment with the soul) in meditation or prayer. In his desire to serve, the serious student takes the group (soul) approach without emphasis on the individual (personality). He seeks ever to

identify with the greater whole (and the greater good) as he shifts his focus from a personal approach to an impersonal, more inclusive one. The serious student knows he is necessarily responsible for handling his own personality life and problems (opportunities). He realizes the purpose of higher group work is not to solve his personal problems but rather to serve all of humanity and all life. Impersonal encouraging energies are made available to all, and not just shared with group members. When the student deepens and makes a serious commitment to the spiritual path, working for the good of all becomes his goal, and the glamour of psychic phenomena holds no attraction.

« Commentary No. 1499

Refinement and Development

There are of course many ways to formulate or express what is necessary in order to properly and fully embrace the spiritual path, but the basics are relatively straight-forward and involve primarily various practices of refinement and development. These practices are both necessary and common to all (truly) spiritual paths at some point.

Refinement involves preliminary practices that prepare the body, the emotions and the mind for enlightenment. Since evolution in consciousness is continuous, so is refinement. The spiritual student, one who is evolving consciously and deliberately, never actually takes leave of the process of refinement. So the various practices continue, indefinitely. And because (commitment to) refinement becomes part of one's nature, there is no implied burden. Refinement at the physical level means taking care of the physical body. Not smoking. Not drinking alcohol. Not taking recreational drugs. Not eating flesh foods, i.e., meat, fish, and fowl. Not over-eating or placing any substantive burden on the physical body. And it means maintaining some reasonable level of physical fitness. In short, it means cultivating a healthy physical body and refining that body so that it serves as an effective instrument for experience and expression. And all of these practices are necessary to serve as a basis for refinement on emotional and mental levels. Without embracing these practices the student cannot progress beyond simply being spiritually-

minded, which is not at all being spiritually-realized. So there is no basis for compromise.

Refinement also means tempering and refining the emotional nature. Not being entangled in the senses. Calming the emotional nature. Allowing the emotional body to simply reflect higher impressions rather than being entangled in various astral phenomena. And it means tempering and refining the mental nature. Of becoming more open-minded, less biased, less conditioned, less materialistic, less entangled in beliefs and opinions. More open to truth. Indeed, it means embracing truth, being dedicated to being truthful in all regards, and to seeking truth, through meditation and through studying philosophy, psychology, religion, and theosophy. Seeking to learn and grow and serve. It also means embracing progressively higher standards of ethics. Including harmlessness. Being considerate toward all lives, human, animal, plant, and mineral.

Development involves various intermediate practices. In a sense refinement is a matter of refining the pieces of the human personality, while development is refining and integrating the whole of the personality. In a sense, refinement leads to development and development requires continual refinement. Continuing and building upon the framework of the preliminary practices, the spiritual student must then temper the personality as a whole, becoming much less self-centered, becoming much less personality-centered, becoming much less head-centered. Many people "think" they are heart-centered when in fact they are head-centered but emotionally-polarized. The spiritual student must become mentally-polarized and truly heart-centered, before the student can truly become intuitively aware.

Thus development involves the cultivation of gentleness and humility, conquering and transcending the ego and the intellect, in the process becoming truly heart-centered and selfless. Cultivating awareness, embracing God in every sense. Embracing love, light, and healing energy. Sharing that love, light, and healing energy. Without imposing in any way.

Section 2.62



Service

The principal role of the spiritual student is to serve humanity (and broader, planetary needs) according to his or her abilities, character, temperament, and values (spiritual maturity). Since service is predominantly a response to higher consciousness, there is ever a group context. Service engages the heart-centered nature.

Meditation and Service

During the probationary years, the consciousness of the aspirant is naturally directed inward. The probationer is necessarily concerned with his own development through purification and self-discipline. Meditation is then primarily the method of introspection and integration, as the waking-consciousness seeks and ultimately finds the inner thread of soul consciousness. But as the probationary period is gradually transformed into discipleship, the thoughts and meditations of the spiritual student are increasingly turned outward to humanity and a life of constructive service. Continuity is maintained between the inner contemplative life and the outer life of effective activity. Meditation then takes on a new dimension as a means of service.

Service is normally thought of in terms of physical plane activity, and humanitarian efforts in the physical world are certainly meaningful. But opportunities for physical plane service may be limited, and in many cases meditation work can be more effective. Wherever there is outer (physical plane) work, meditation can be used to enhance and improve the quality of the work (through the sharing of spiritual energy). And on etheric levels meditation can encourage the flow of vital planetary forces while eliminating or discouraging (etheric) congestion. Proper meditation should also encourage the vitality (and manifested spiritual quality) of the spiritual student, thus improving the student's effectiveness in his relationships with others. It is the demonstrated quality of the life of the humanitarian or spiritual person in the outer world that offers the greatest encouragement, through example.

Meditation is also an effective means of improving the emotional climate of the planet. With a pure heart and disciplined (purified) emotional quality, the student in meditation can project (share) spiritual energies on astral (emotional) levels; those energies then can have quite a positive effect in the elimination of negative emotions and glammers. The force of aspiration is quite potent in sweeping the immediate emotional atmosphere into higher (purer and more disciplined) vibration. Even the contemplation of heart qualities in meditation is a sharing of spiritual energies.

Meditation is even more effective in cleansing the planetary thought-world and eliminating various illusions (attachments to wrong ideas). The concrete mental projection of positive thought-forms is one of the more significant ways in which the spiritual student can be of service to humanity. The emotional climate and the thought-world of the planet have quite an influence on humanity. The thought-forms and feelings generated and sustained by humanity usually breed more glamour and illusion. But through right-thinking and right-feeling higher quality forms are made available, with more beneficial influence. Through right meditation the quality of consciousness is improved and shared, giving encouragement to those who seek light in the outer darkness.

The various problems of humanity can be pondered and solutions (through consciousness) encouraged. Higher ideas can be contacted and shared on humanitarian levels, without attachment. Healing energies can be invoked and evoked for humanity through the service of meditation. And a life of selfishness can be transformed into a life of selflessness, as the right relationship between the individual and the group (humanity) is realized and attained. Meditation offers many opportunities for spiritual service, as well as the enhancement of physical plane efforts. As the bridge of consciousness is achieved for humanity, between the inner world of the soul and the outer world of illusionary activity, then so shall humanity be healed and further progress.

« Commentary No. 164

Service and Discretion

Service has been defined as work or action performed that is helpful, useful, and beneficial to others, a contribution to the welfare of humanity. But in a deeper sense, service is the consequence of soul contact, and as such is directly related to the evolutionary urge of life itself. As the student begins to achieve soul contact with increasing regularity and quality, the natural energies of the soul being to stream forth along lines of light and love (and purpose), so that the soul finds increasingly unimpeded expression through the qualified and obedient personality. This natural outpouring of spiritual energies is the real (immediate) objective of the spiritual path, as each who treads the path ultimately becomes wedded to the path.

If the student becomes concerned with service prematurely (or without sincerity), then the efforts of the student are likely to be personality-centered, and therefore impediments to the free-flowing (apparent) spontaneity of the soul. Even the student who has achieved some measure of soul contact may be (frequently or otherwise) distracted by the rational (or irrational) personality. The student who seeks fruit in action, the student who tries to serve, is a student who fails to understand the fundamental (esoteric) nature of true service. The spiritual student is urged to maintain consistency in soul contact and to respond freely (almost unconsciously) to the evoked energy.

Discretion in service (in the deeper sense) is by no means a rational (consciously deliberate) act of discrimination. Discretion is the ability to make responsible decisions and the act of such decision-making. In the deeper sense it is an (almost unconscious) intuitive process that guides all efforts of the (truly aligned and spiritually responsive) spiritual student in the lower worlds. It is the wisdom of appropriateness, for the enlightened spiritual student intuitively recognizes the appropriateness of every action (or inaction); even if the reasons are not apparent, there should be a sense of appropriateness. In this way, the student is guided (by the soul) into the proper place (approach) (disposition) and the influence that the student exerts is more meaningful (in light of higher purpose (law) rather than personalities or reasoning). The poised spiritual student cannot therefore infringe upon the rights (freedoms) (responsibilities) (karma) (dharma) of others.

Discretion in service involves a higher sense of responsibility (which is dharma). Dharma (duty) involves living in harmony with life and the law (purpose) of life. The spiritual student should live harmlessly and with wisdom (discretion), in harmony with the soul and in harmony with the energies (laws) which govern the evolution of consciousness on all levels. A life of service (commitment to the soul and to humanity) is a life of complete cooperation with the destiny (intention) of all lives. And at the same time, it is a life of utter simplicity, since the entire focus or concern is centered on the source (the soul). With one-pointed attention to the higher self, the actions performed in the lower world become natural, automatic, and without the infringement of (distraction by) personality-centered energies.

The only truly substantial dharma incurred by the spiritual student is the alignment of the lower life with the higher, for then everything else is placed in proper perspective. The consequence of such alignment (soul contact) may be inexplicable to the ordinary senses, for the law (karma) (evolution) is all-pervasive, and the dedicated (and freely obligated) student is then in atonement with the law, a servant of greater forces than the purely personal (selfish), an intelligent and meaningful expression of the divine life and wisdom.

« Commentary No. 477

Activity and Service

Though it may appear easy enough to distinguish the three aspects of proper activity (development, being, and occult work), they are in fact one and the same, and essentially inseparable, for one cannot develop without being and without creative (inductive) endeavor, one cannot be a spiritual student (proper) without progress and service, and one (similarly) cannot be involved in occult work without progress and being. The important thing in this context is to live in accordance with the obligations (harmony) of the path, without independently willful activity.

For the spiritual student, all of the student's activity becomes (gradually) (increasingly) more in accordance with dharma, and (increasingly) more qualified by service. This implies, necessarily, progressively lesser qualification by the personality and progressively greater qualification by the soul. This also means that as the student progresses, the character and nature of the student's service activities change gradually and progressively as well, becoming more impersonal, more subtle, more in accordance with the path (dharma).

Initially, the student (aspirant) responds to the energy (qualification) of the path (typically) unconsciously and in a relatively pragmatic manner, being helpful in the world of outer activity, serving humanity (or some other element of planetary life) in some way, consistent with consciousness and understanding, but nonetheless externally and objectively focused. This activity is potentially worthwhile, particularly to the extent that it is not distorted by glamour or illusion, and not for the sake of apparent accomplishment (effects), but for the

sake of positive (constructive) energy expression, encouragement, induction, etc. But the student must (eventually) realize that any service activity is itself an effect and cannot in itself accomplish any goal or objective. The goal or objective can only be accomplished where it is warranted in karma, in which case all of the necessary ingredients will be present to effect the needed result. Otherwise all effort is futile. But effort that is consistent with karma, or at least responsive to karmic considerations, will be more likely effective (and therefore a more worthy effort).

Of course it is not for the student to judge karmic matters, but it is for the student to cultivate an intuitive (non-judgmental) sense of appropriateness. As the individual awareness and understanding grows, so likely shall the sense of appropriateness grow and become a meaningful guide to activity. Then the work (service) of the spiritual student becomes more appropriately qualified. There is then less involvement in outer activities (although the student may remain a constructive and inductive presence) and more involvement in and focusing on constructive meditation work (service) and intermediate activities that are not imposing but merely encouraging.

The more significant aspect of the activity and service transformation is that service to humanity is gradually transformed into service to God (and therefore the spiritual path (which is the relationship of the spiritual student to God)). Serving humanity is most effective when it is performed incidentally, in the context of the spiritual path, and not as an end in itself. The reason for this is absorption. Serving humanity (as an end in itself) involves the personality primarily as a personality, and not merely as an instrument of the soul, whereas service to the path (potentially) involves far less absorption, and therefore greater spiritual potency (albeit subtle). Service in the context of the path deals primarily with causes and relationships and is therefore a much more effective means of evolutionary encouragement.

Service

Service is a natural and normally realized attribute of a spiritual student, and it is one of the highest functions a student can perform at this stage of evolution. In the usual sense, service is the occupation, function or act of serving, i.e., helpful work performed. In a higher, spiritual sense it is the meaningful, unending, internally (soul) motivated contribution to the welfare of others, in whatever capacity deemed appropriate.

While a deeply ingrained service motive is usually a natural (unobtrusive) part of a soul qualified, spiritually integrated student, this is not true of humanity in general. In the early stages of personality formation, when the individual is melding the physical, emotional, and mental bodies to work cooperatively, the personality (lower self) orientation is extreme selfishness (self-centeredness). As the personality approaches (initially progresses along) the spiritual path, a dim realization surfaces (in response to ongoing, albeit low-level soul stimulation) indicating that reality only exists in the service motive. Initially this reality is fleeting, since the signal is weak and the naive student is almost totally unaware of the real, inner self, for the signal lacks focus (the personality strives to obliterate and subdue the soul impulse), and thus, the personality is able to easily repress the signal. Nevertheless, the signal undyingly (gently) persists, making itself felt more regularly as a precursor of things to come, no matter how unwilling the personality.

As soul-contact becomes a matter of soul control (from personality to soul guidance), the service motive becomes more a reality, rather than an inconsequential expression, in which service becomes a considerable part of the student's life. Thus, soul expression and/or spiritual development (integration and alignment) of the personality is in part equated to realizing the service motive, for from the perspective of the soul there is nothing else.

Prior to embarking upon the spiritual path, however unconsciously, the individual does not participate in service. While the individual is at a probationary stage of spiritual development, service is secondary (subdued by the personality), yet considerable periods of relatively meaningful, soul-

motivated service can and do occur. However, since such a personality is still self-oriented, personal indulgence is more the rule than the exception, since the service motive is weak. At the probationary stage, service activities are limited and relatively superficial (often resulting from glamour). But as the student progresses on the path, service is more properly embraced.

Eventually over many incarnations, the reference shifts so that activities are unreservedly service oriented, for the soul knows no half measures (and the student is then truly on the path). If less than whole-hearted service motives persist, then it is not of true soul-contact, but one in which the personality is deluding the student into believing that motives are pure (of the highest type) (one of appearances (personality) rather than substance (soul)). Once the service motive is truly embraced, service is done willingly and without reservation, somewhat akin to achieving the most desired personality wish (even though the joy, if it can be called that, of performing at the service level (soul), is not really comparable, being of higher quality). For the soul, unreserved service is everything, and thus, personality self-fulfillment and the service motive (soul) are not comparable. Under these circumstances, service becomes a full time endeavor, similar to and replacing the full time endeavor of the personality searching for self-gratification. At this service level, the end result is a positive activity of goodwill for mankind.

« Commentary No. 674

Sacrifice and Service

Just as service is a primary characteristic of the soul, sacrifice is an inherent characteristic of the soul's activity. Whereas the personality seeks the fulfillment of desire through activity in the lower worlds, the soul seeks its fulfillment in service through sacrifice. As the spiritual student progresses on the path, the sacrificial impulse of the soul becomes more compelling. In personality refinement (self-sacrifice) and group endeavor (Self-sacrifice) this impulse manifests.

In the most basic sense, to sacrifice is "to make sacred (holy) (dedicated to God)." In this sense, any act which uplifts essence of a lower level to some

higher level (on whatever plane) is a sacrificial act. All efforts made in purification of the personality may therefore be viewed as sacrificial in nature. The student is compelled to cast all the dross and impurities of the lower nature into the sacrificial fire within. Letting go of the lower (whether it be indulgences, reactivity, strong emotions, crystallized thoughts, etc.), that the higher may be attained is the process of (personality) self-sacrifice.

Sacrifice on group levels (Self-sacrifice) does not involve so much the activity of "giving up" something, as the mere activity of "giving." Indeed the Law of Sacrifice may be expressed as the "impulse to giving." To act wholly under this impulse means that one desires nothing for the separated self, that all resources (time, money, thought, energy, etc.) are viewed and appropriated in accordance with whatever is the need of the whole (the group) (humanity). To truly sacrifice (serve) is to give completely to meet the need without regard for the extent (share) to which others are giving (or not). To truly sacrifice is to hold no desire for the recognition of any gift or service, nor to see the fruits of any action. To truly sacrifice is to give whatever is needed, trusting securely in the soul (all insecurities are born of the personality). The sacrificial impulse (of the soul) is distinctly different from any emotional compulsion to indiscriminately relinquish resources due to enchantment by a "cause" or (emotionally) magnetic leader. It is the ever increasing identification with the One (the group), through the soul, that encourages true sacrifice, not mere foolishness based on emotional reaction.

Within a spiritual group, as selfish personal interests are released, this impulse to give draws the spiritual student ever into fuller, more joyful participation in the work of the group. The student who seeks primarily that which the group may offer him will find little, but he who seeks earnestly (with patience and consistency) to give whatever he may to the group will find the true comradeship born of shared struggle, work, and opportunity. He will deepen and grow (ever along with his brothers on the path) nearer to the One.

On a higher turn of the spiral, it is the sacrifice (fixed determination) of the solar logos and the cosmic logos, that brings into and sustains all in manifestation that lesser lives (such as humanity) may have the opportunity of upliftment (evolution) (release) into higher lives. Even with understanding of the correspondence of sacrifice on human levels, it is difficult to begin to

comprehend the supreme sacrifice of these great beings. The keynote of sacrifice pervades all of manifestation (and is requisite to manifestation). Identification with sacrifice (rather than resentment of its call) will similarly pervade the entire life of the dedicated spiritual student. Sharing appropriately (constructively), while embracing the sacrificial aspect (nature) of the soul, ultimately brings the mind and heart of the personality into balance and in their upliftment to the soul is true spiritual union realized.

« Commentary No. 681

The Paradox of Service 1

For most of humanity at this time, the main focus in active consciousness is that of lower-nature (astral), emotional, sense-gratification. This self-oriented, excessively indulging focus (absorption) demands unending gratification, and anything less than instant reward (for the senses) is considered a sacrifice, and not to be considered or even tolerated. This orientation is a natural (necessary) step in the evolutionary process of humanity (hopefully for a limited (reasonable) time), following the premise that one must learn to walk before one can learn to run. In a similar way, before sacrificing (serving (a soul function)), the ego (lower-self) (personality) is generally (usually) allowed to fulfill (achieve) (learn) (go beyond) its lower nature indulgences (but not unendingly).

However, as the emotional self-indulgence continues (for years, lifetimes, eons (?)), a time comes when the question (issue) is faced (considered) (recognized) and the student wonders if these (sense-gratifications, ego-centered achievements) are all there is, for self-gratification has limits of indulgence (excesses) (even though it may not seem so) that in time naturally bring forth (evoke) an upward reaching (to the ever-waiting soul) that leads eventually the personality (mankind) to more meaningful (higher) pursuits (that are service-related and thus, sacrificial from the lower (ego) perspective).

This natural (higher) soul-dictated stimulation is occurring (is always in the process of occurring) in some (relatively few) individuals (not without struggle) at this time. These higher-oriented (inner) individuals (spiritual students) are interested in more than just lower (ego) self-gratification, and thus, these

pioneers making this initial, meaningful soul contact (who are gradually becoming more an accepted norm) are part of the leading edge of human evolution (the new group of (soul-infused) world servers) (those that sacrifice) (spiritual students).

While those engrossed with the lower, mundane perspective cannot accept that anything meaningful exists beyond the gratifying self-indulgence (of the personality), similar (but different) considerations are equally true from the higher, soul perspective as experienced by the spiritual student, in which anything less than a pure service (sacrificial) motive is not to be considered. In this case, the all-inclusive, higher soul-perspective (as to the lower, exclusive, mundane personality) can understand, but not accept undue concern about a natural (inevitable) upward transition (i.e., service and/or sacrifice).

With this perspective, while the lower vehicles (personality) are not able (interested) (willing) to understand the more inclusive motive behind (the need for) sacrifice (service), the higher self (equally) cannot understand (and/or accept) anything less. Even more interesting, or paradoxically, from the higher (soul) perspective, there is no sacrifice in service, and much like (but not really) the mundane, lower nature requirement (of the personality) for emotional indulgences (excesses of the body), the soul must also be able (allowed) to indulge (?) itself (in service (sacrifice)). Thus, from the higher orientation, service is not a sacrifice, but rather a natural (necessary) condition that (will) must exist in order for the soul-infused individual (spiritual student) to develop and unfold. In addition, while this service may appear to be sacrificial from the lower reference (consciousness (of the personality)), it really is not, but rather it is the norm of the future, if the group-oriented (impersonal) soul-infused reference is to fulfill its natural (inevitable) destiny in the overall scheme (plan) of evolution.

The Paradox of Service 2

The consciousness of the majority of present humanity is emotionally focused; however, in any evolutionary period, a few advanced individuals (spiritual students) are gradually (continually) discovering (recognizing) that the issues of the lower-nature (personality) are no longer important. Initially, the higher awareness of the transitioning individual (aspirant) is unconscious and weak, but gradually this awareness becomes stronger, more durable, and conscious, and the soul (of the spiritual student) becomes more in control. Up to and during this transition (struggle), personality interests still prevail, but once this new awareness is fully in place, personality interests become less engaging, for an impetus is ever present for something more (i.e., soul-stimulated interest in service and sacrifice).

The distance (time) (separation) between those (aspirants) just achieving an awareness of the soul and those (initiates) who have achieved (conscious) soul awareness can seem considerable, and thus, it may (but need not) take considerable time (effort) to negotiate this separation. Due to this (falsely) perceived distance, it is (often) natural for aspirants just beginning the trek (homeward) to the soul (based on desire (kama-manas), rather than a meaningful soul-oriented understanding), to think of the advanced spiritual student with special (unwarranted) (unappreciated) regard, which can range from placing them on a pedestal (idolatry) to aggravated envy (depending on the relative status of the reference personality).

Such (extreme) responses are inappropriate, for there are no references in the plan for any essential inequalities (there are, however, non-equivalences). All are merely (equal) divine sparks of life on (relatively) (inconsequential) different steps of the evolutionary continuum. Furthermore, some of those who appear more advanced (more capable) are souls that were held back from another lifewave (for failing to progress sufficiently) or who have joined this lifewave for particular (obscure) reasons. However, in the greater plan, such considerations are unimportant, being primarily indicative of a personality consideration, but not that of the more impersonal soul.

This love/hate personality perception is interesting (peculiar), for the relatively advanced spiritual student is merely dealing with the higher consciousness sooner, and thus, the process should not be externally perceived either favorably or unfavorably, but merely as a natural evolutionary step (i.e., the soul achieving its destiny, much like the personality before). In addition, such (advanced) individuals are necessary as path leaders. The inconsistency of any personality response (reaction) is natural for the lower self or personality. But in the soul reference, the mundane personality has very little impact. The personality that (wrongly) believes that subjugation (sublimation) equals dissolution is simply fighting to hold on to itself (which is a natural instinct of material existence).

The advanced student (who is not required to incarnate or who has reached the point where there is no longer any need to incarnate) who incarnates has already made (performed) the ultimate sacrifice (service) (since incarnation threatens (by absorption) one's spiritual nature), by merely incarnating. While the average person in incarnation generally considers life (living) as precious and not to be lost or given up (offered in sacrifice), the spiritual student regards living in this world either as an opportunity for service or (sometimes) even a painful obligation. Thus there seems to be a never ending paradox of service and sacrifice.

« Commentary No. 1262

Noble Work

The spiritual student is encouraged not only to be continually engaged in the processes of learning and growing, all the while (gradually) deepening in consciousness, but also to be continually engaged in some sort of noble or magnanimous work or undertaking. Not noble in the sense of glamorous or "important" but noble in the sense of being worthwhile, of contributing in some way to the welfare of others, of being a legitimate expression of the higher nature, allowing one's higher energies and faculties to be expressed effectively (subtly) in the (ordinary) world.

For some the noble work and professional undertakings are synonymous, as the work itself may be inherently positively encouraging to others' welfare. For some the noble work is primarily through volunteer work of one sort or another

rather than professionally. For others it may be simply a matter of living one's higher values through the context of some (otherwise not necessarily so obviously noble) undertaking. For some it is all of these things. What matters is that the higher consciousness be allowed to be expressed effectively, and this cannot occur when the person is absorbed in mundane affairs, in materialism or egoism, or entangled in the senses. So part of the undertaking is to be "doing" noble work, but another part of the undertaking is to ensure that one is effective in that work by not being so personality-centered.

One should not be overly concerned with apparent results or measurable impacts (which may be misleading and/or englamouring), but rather one should be concerned with the process of ennobling one's work. It is the flow of energy, the qualification of one's atmosphere and surroundings, the goodwill evoked, the encouragement provided, that really matters. To perform one's work graciously, magnanimously, is more important than what one actually does (provided that what one does is not inherently destructive or counter-evolutionary). The real role of the spiritual student is to facilitate evolution in consciousness, not by contriving to do so, but primarily by living a spiritual life and engaging in noble work.

So what is ignoble? Anything that demonstrates the lower nature or encourages something (some practice that is) counter-evolutionary. Anything that is imposed on others. Anything that demonstrates or encourages lack of respect for others. Anything that demonstrates or encourages practices that are inherently unhealthy (e.g., smoking, drinking alcohol, eating flesh foods, taking drugs). A lack of good will, or lack of patience, lack of gentleness, lack of kindness, etc.

So what is noble? Anything that demonstrates the higher nature, through character, morals, ethics, principles, and values. Not in any imposing manner, but simply by virtue of how one lives one's life. So whatever work is engaged, it should not encourage anything counter-evolutionary, but encourage (primarily by example) learning and growing. Work that is inherently constructive. Work that has some value or worth in human consciousness. Not work that is merely worldly, although worldly work engaged in a noble manner can be noble, provided the work does not encourage anything counter-evolutionary. One should realize that most people are where they need to be, and that one's noble

work is simply a matter of planting-seeds-by-example (and by encouragement-of-energy). Thus what is evolutionary for the spiritual student may be not what is evolutionary for most people. The student should not worry about what is or what is not evolutionary for others, but simply realize that one's sense of what is evolutionary should not be imposed.



Section 2.63



The Greater Work

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The Greater Work 1

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The first order of service is that which can be accomplished primarily on the physical plane and with ordinary (personality) means and relates primarily to individuals or to groups of individuals (i.e., not in the context of group consciousness). Included are virtually all aspects of what are considered charitable and/or humanitarian efforts, any expression of goodwill, etc. These activities are essential to human progress, not that the apparent effects or objectives of humanitarian efforts are particularly useful (indeed, many are counterproductive from the standpoint of learning (e.g., healing without consideration for understanding the causal relationships and therefore without consideration for bringing about changes in consciousness) or are karmically neutral), but because the energy of goodwill (service) demonstrated or expressed within humanity has such a positive, inductive effect on (within) humanity.

The second order of service is that which (a) relates primarily to groups of people (in the context of consciousness) and/or (b) is accomplished primarily and consciously on the astral (emotional) plane. More properly this order (a) is a matter of group effort rather than supportive of particular groups in any distinctive (separative or exclusive) manner. And this order (b) can relate to individuals or groups in some astral or etheric context. Examples in this second sense (b) include the work of "invisible helpers," providing prana or vitalized energy for healing purposes, and/or working directly with a patient's aura, but more properly include qualifying the astral atmosphere of the planet, either in the localized sense or generally (purposively). The second order of service also and properly (primarily) includes working with (the overcoming of) maya and glamour.

The third order of service, and the highest at which many spiritual students (in incarnation) are able to work (if they would only apply themselves

appropriately), is that which (a) relates directly to humanity as a whole and/or (b) is accomplished primarily and consciously on concrete mental levels. The third order of service also includes working with (the overcoming of) glamour and illusion. Beyond this third order, the masters work primarily on soul levels (abstract mental, buddhic, and atmic levels) and rely on those spiritual students (disciples) who can effectively bridge between soul and personality levels (primarily between the abstract and concrete mental levels) (and to some extent between buddhic and astral levels) for implementation and fulfillment.

The spiritual student should serve as an instrument of distribution of higher energies (qualification) at lower levels, by virtue of his or her presence (character, quality, and temperament) within humanity. Thus serving primarily on the higher (astral and concrete mental) levels in no way precludes the more or less unconscious (incidental) service on lower levels (etheric and astral) (which can be just as important and just as relevant). But the student should strive to work on the highest level and broadest scope at which he or she is effective.

Opportunities for service are both a matter of group and individual karma and a matter of responsiveness. In order to serve, one must be responsive to opportunities to serve. But one must also exercise discretion in service and not permit personality attachments to interfere with one's ability to serve primarily at higher levels.

« Commentary No. 893

The Greater Work 2

According to law (karma) and in the context of the spiritual path (dharma), the spiritual student is obliged to work primarily at the highest level that he or she is capable of working, of primarily supporting that which he or she perceives or recognizes as the highest expression of service. This rule should be obvious to the aspirant, but many are distracted by lesser opportunities and thereby lose the greater, and fail to fulfill that which is needed and in accordance with their abilities (some, too, wait for greater opportunities and fail to apply themselves to the current (highest immediate) opportunity).

Every student has a limited measure of power (energy) (force) [flow] to apply or express in a given (distributed) opportunity. Duty requires that the student

apply or express that measure in the most effective manner, to the most appropriate task or function. For the true disciple there is no distraction by more personal (lesser) service opportunities. The lesser opportunities are left for those who are better suited to their fulfillment, while the disciple proceeds with what is, for him or her, the higher work, according to his or her abilities, temperament, and calling. Along with the admonition for the spiritual student to work primarily at the higher levels is the corollary, that the spiritual student should strive (non-competitively and without ambition or pride) to be the best that he or she can be, in consciousness, at all times.

Greater (higher) and lesser (lower) in this sense refer to the context of level (order) and quality of consciousness, not to any absolute value! If a student capable of working on the mental plane "spends" his or her time (attention) and energy in physical or emotional plane (service) activities, then that time and energy is truly wasted, in the sense that there are relatively few who can work on the higher levels and relatively many who can work on the lower levels, and where the higher work is not accomplished, the lesser could have been accomplished by others. One might think that the greater work should be left to those who are not in incarnation, yet the real value of the greater work lies in the fact of the server's physical plane existence, for such service is performed from within incarnated humanity rather than from without, and that service is therefore much more effective in leading humanity onward.

It is fundamentally a matter of priorities. Those of higher calling (the so-called masters of wisdom) are drawn ever onward and upward (and are therefore not able to "work" on lower levels). Those who follow must fill the needs on those (to them, higher) levels, to the full extent of their abilities and training. There is always more work to be done than can be accomplished. That is the nature of the path (and associated work) [and such is the nature of humanity's karmic balance, favoring progress]. And that is a consequence of karma in the broader sense and context. Yet progress on all real levels requires that the "greater work" be embraced and that the "lesser work" be foregone. In this sense the higher work refers not only to level of consciousness (e.g., mental is "higher" than emotional) but also to scope of service (e.g., helpfulness to individuals is a "low-order" service, usefulness in some group context is "intermediate", but real (high-order) service is that which serves all of humanity).

In the final analysis, one should do what is before one to do. If a choice exists (where one's obligation is not apparent), then one should chose the higher alternative. In the greater work one is also (incidentally) serving on lower levels as well, by virtue of the student's physical plane existence (aura). But the focus of attention should ever be on the greater work.

« Commentary No. 894

The Greater Work 3

Another aspect of the greater work is the service pyramid or chain of service activities reaching from the lowest levels of special interest work and individual support activities (normal effects-oriented charitable and humanitarian activities) through the intermediate levels of causal service, to the highest levels of group or collective service well beyond the ken of humanity.

The chain is represented as a service pyramid because the largest number of workers function on the lowest levels and the smallest number of workers function on the highest levels (and proportionately in between). Most people in incarnation are more or less conscious on physical levels and that minority of humanity, those men and women of goodwill, who work (serve) on those more or less objective levels are quite numerous with regard to the majority of humanity. Relatively few are able to work more or less consciously (or at least deliberately) and constructively on astral levels, and fewer still are able to work more or less consciously and deliberately on concrete mental levels. So a natural, hierarchical progression exists from the base (humanity as a whole) to the superhuman kingdom (of masters) and beyond.

The service pyramid is represented as a chain in the sense that one level or scope of service naturally leads to another, higher or broader level, as the worker evolves or progresses in service (dharma). By progressing in this sense of service, one is increasingly albeit gradually increasingly responding to higher need and simultaneously inducing or drawing others onward and upward from lower levels (without deliberation or manipulation or imposition or compulsion). From this point of view, the greater work is in fact the means whereby all of humanity is impelled onward and upward, from within. Those at each level extend their helpfulness to those within reach (responsiveness), who in turn

extend their helpfulness to others. The chain thereby constitutes a multi-dimensional and bi-directional inductive (and responsive, respectively) flow of evolutionary energy. Purpose (qualification) (encouragement) flows "downward" from the higher levels, while the products of responsiveness (assimilated experience) flow "upward" from the lower levels. Any one who serves (collectively) as a link in that chain is contributing directly to the whole.

Paradoxically, as one grows onward and upward toward the peak of the service pyramid, one's level and scope of service is broadened (although one may have some specialization, one is increasingly able to (and drawn to) work in a broader context). And of course one never reaches that peak, as the peak recedes in accordance with the broadening (deepening) of one's vision. While one should strive to work at the highest levels that one is effectively able, one should also be wary of the glamour of service (and the glamour of the path in general), particularly the glamour of significance or importance. All spiritual work is important and none particularly so.

"Lower" work is just as essential as the "higher" work, and while working at the higher levels implies some measure of ability (and calling), with wisdom the spiritual student realizes the continuity of consciousness that exists between all levels (in fact ultimately recognizes the fallacy of levels) and simply plays his or her role in accordance with his or her calling (dharma and opportunity based on ability and circumstances), without any sense of individual significance. In fact, the further one progresses the less is that sense of personality or ego and the greater is the sense of humble participation in the greater life, at whatever level.

